



**TOWN OF GRAFTON**  
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**MAR 24 2016**

**PLANNING BOARD  
GRAFTON, MA**

**TOWN ADMINISTRATOR**

March 24, 2016

Sargon Hanna  
Grafton Planning Board Chair  
Grafton Memorial Municipal Center  
30 Providence Road  
Grafton, MA 01519

RE: Super Park Narrative and Request of Waivers

Dear Mr. Hanna:

The Town of Grafton is seeking Special Permit and Site Plan approval for the construction of Super Park at 4 & 6 Upton Street. This project, which has received support and funding from the community and Town Meeting, is before the Board as the last step in the permitting process prior to the commencement of construction.

Background

The original Super Park was built in the 80's. Five years ago, in preparation for building our new High School, the Super Park was removed. At the time it was removed, it was in need of an overhaul, but the children of Grafton still loved it! It was a gathering place for both parents and caretakers and children. It was a place that both adults and childhood friendships were formed and developed.

Parks add value to communities. Parks provide children with opportunities for play, and play is critical in the development of muscle strength, coordination, language and cognitive abilities. Parks, playgrounds, greenways, trails and community open spaces help keep Americans and their communities fit and healthy. The Center for Disease control and prevention has called for more parks and playgrounds. Studies have shown that by providing access to parks, people exercise more and it helps fight obesity.

When it was removed, the people of Grafton expected that it would be replaced. Let us bring back to Grafton a wonderful community asset so that future families can gather and let children of all ages and abilities play together. The Super Park Committee was charged in December 2010 by the Board of Selectmen to develop a plan to replace & rebuild Super Park. Replacing the Super Park remained important to Town residents when in 2014, the Open Space and Recreation Plan Survey results showed that Super Park & child playground were the highest-ranked recreational facility needed by town residents. Hiking and biking trails were the next highest.

Overview

The land at 4 and 6 Upton Street was purchased in 2011. The property was identified as the ideal location for Super Park due to its proximity to the Town Common and Library.

Consisting of 11.93 acres, the property abuts land owned by the Grafton Upton Rail Road to the north, the library to the northwest, residential properties fronting on South Street to the West, and a 35 acre parcel that connects to Sibley Street to the south and east.

The property is located in the Neighborhood Business District, which extends 200 feet south into the property from Upton Street. The remainder of the property is located in the Residence 40 district. The use of the property for Super Park falls under the category of "Public Recreational Facilities" and requires a special permit and site plan approval.

#### Existing Conditions

The property is essentially forested with the exception of a 10,000 square foot parking lot which was constructed in late 2014. The parking lot provides additional parking for the library and for events at the Town Common.

The property is primarily deciduous trees with a stand of coniferous trees in the northwest corner of the site and towards the center of the site. A wetland is located on the northwestern portion of the site.

#### Proposed Development Plan

Development plans for the site include the construction of a playground with its accessory parking and driveway. The playground build out will be 15,400 square feet.

The Super Park Committee revised the plans to allow for a wider driveway, additional parking including handicap spaces directly in front of the entrance to the park, and an emergency turnaround. The Committee also wanted to ensure that there was adequate access to the rear portion of the parcel.

These site construction related items are significant and have increased the cost of the overall project. A driveway and parking lot which can be utilized for more than just Super Park have a high cost. The infrastructure developed here could benefit the town by providing safe and convenient parking for any and all events held at the town common like our well attended Farmers Markets, mobbed summer Concerts or festive events like Grafton Celebrates the Holidays. Overflow parking could be utilized for the library both now and in the future even if the town decides to expand the building. These costs are not only just about Super Park

#### Proposed Site Plan

The submitted site plans dated September 16, 2015 were revised December 28, 2015 to reflect comments from Conservation Commission's stormwater and wetland review and include responses to the Graves Engineering's comments received during the Conservation Commission's hearing process.

The site plan includes the construction of a 530 foot access drive with "T" turnaround for emergency vehicles. The project will provide 11 parking space, two of which are handicapped accessible. The playground will be surfaced with a permeable poured in place rubber material that will infiltrate to a stone reservoir below. In recognition of the seasonal use, light traffic and minimal winter maintenance requirements particular to the proposed use; porous pavement has been proposed within the driveway and parking area to minimize stormwater runoff.

## Other Elements

**Access:** Access to Super Park will be through the exiting curb cut for the accessory parking lot that was constructed in 2014. The location, further away from the Town Common than the library parking lot, is 111 feet from the library entrance and 234 feet from the crosswalk connecting the northwest corner of the library to the Grafton Inn. To the east, sight distance is in excess of 647 feet. Due to the proximity of the rail road tracks and the necessity for traffic to slow crossing over the tracks, there is ample time for vehicles to exit out of the site.



**Lighting:** The site plan indicates the installation of 7 lights, four adjacent to the parking lot and driveway and three lights around the play equipment. The purpose of the lights is to provide night security and not to allow for night time use. The lights will be similar to the design of the library. Lights will be LED and utilize full cut-offs to direct light down to the surface so the light source will not be visible. It is anticipated that the lights will be mounted on posts 10 feet in height. Details of the lighting fixtures will be provided to the Planning Board at a future date when final details are prepared.

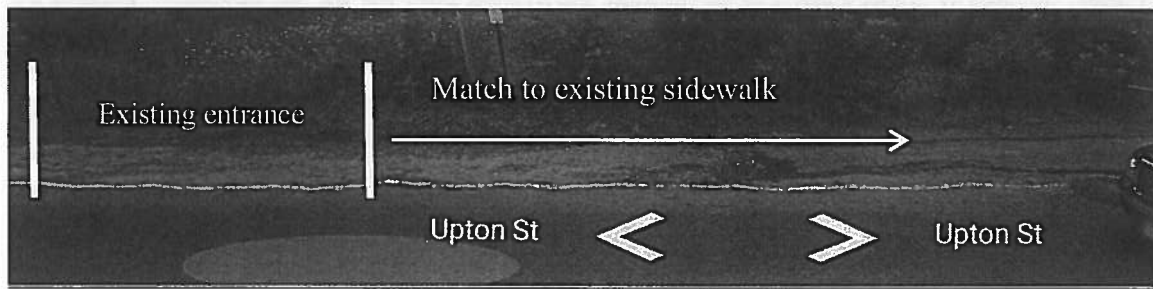
**Fencing:** Two types of fencing are being proposed. Along the Grafton & Upton Rail Road property line, a four foot tall chain link fence (black vinyl coated) is to be installed from running from Upton Street to the fence enclosure for the playground. Around the playground, aluminum fencing is proposed. Details of the aluminum fencing will be provided to the Planning Board at a future date when final details are prepared.

**Signs:** The Conservation Commission has required a number of signs as part of its Order of Conditions. One sign stating "No Sanding or Salting" is to be located at the entrance drive to the property. Signs stating "Protected No Disturb Wetland Buffer" will be installed at 25 foot intervals rather than the 30 feet indicated on the plans. At the time of the submission of this application, sign placement or design have not been finalized. While municipal signs are exempt from the sign bylaw, the Committee will review the design and placement of a sign with the Planning Board.

**Solid Waste:** Trash receptacles will be located at the park prior to opening of the park. Final design has not been determined and may be similar to waste receptacles used at other parks. Removal of trash will be done by town employees using pickup trucks, just as waste removal is conducted at other parks in town.

**Sidewalk:** The plan calls for a sidewalk along the access drive from Upton Street to the playground area. The plans call for the sidewalk to be extended along the frontage and a driveway detail showing the sidewalk ADA transition is included on the detail sheet. With the paving of the apron, the sidewalk will be paved to match the existing sidewalk (see picture below). While the Committee acknowledges that it would be desirable to reconstruct the

sidewalk from the driveway entrance to the Town Common, reconstruction of the sidewalk adjacent to Upton Street should be undertaken as a larger sidewalk program.



### Phasing

The Committee has proposed phasing the project so that monies used are a reallocation of funds, and no new taxes will be raised. Phasing allows us to pay as we go, spreading out the total cost and allows for reasonable changes along the way.

Phase 1 consists of site construction work which includes items like installing the driveway, installing parking area, installing a fence, installing a sidewalk and installing a drainage system. Once all of the infrastructure work is complete, playground structures and surfacing will be purchased. The surface, poured in place rubber surfacing, is costly but is critical for handicap accessibility and to provide a playground for all abilities

The Committee has started fundraising efforts and is seeking grant opportunities including, state, federal and CPC funding for Phase 2, which consists of additional play equipment. In an attempt to look at one possible long term vision for the site, the committee has discussed the possibility adding a splash pad.

Any future addition or phase will depend on the success of private fund raising, grant opportunities and the wants of the town. Other possibilities for the future include a walking trail around the property, and additional municipal parking.

The installation of the play equipment will be done using the “community build” model, where volunteers build the playground with assistance, will be planned. A community build will bring Grafton residents together as a community and have the extra benefit of saving 30 -35% project costs. This is how the play structure at the North Street School was built. Community Build projects typically happen as weekend events.

### Park Usage

The proposed Super Park will be everything that the original park was and more. It will be for children of all ages and abilities, focusing on accessibility. The surface will be a poured in rubber surface. This is an important feature to comply with current Americans with Disabilities Act standards. I believe it is important to point out that adults with mobility issues will be able to actively play with their children or grandchildren.

The features of the structure will be varied and designed for children of all ages and abilities to play together. Many of the small neighborhood playgrounds have equipment for younger children but lack play equipment for the older children.

Many of the existing play structures in town are either neighborhood focused or added as an “accessory use” to a ball field and are not standalone full playgrounds. Most people visit these playgrounds when they are using the sport’s facilities. They often cater to one age bracket or another, i.e. 2-5 or 5-12 and not all ages or those with accessibility needs. While we have some great play structures throughout town, we do not have a single play structure in Grafton surrounded by the safe poured in place ground solution. The mulch covered play areas which we have here in town are messy, hard to maintain and not suitable for anyone confined to a wheelchair or with sight limitations.

#### Park Hours

The Super Park will be posted as being open from dawn to dusk. While lights are proposed, the lights are for enforcement purposes only.

#### Requested Waivers

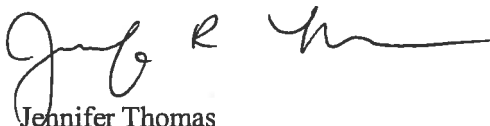
The Super Park Committee has completed a list of waivers from submission requirements associated with this Application, which is attached.

#### Conclusion

The construction of Super Park at 4 & 6 Upton Street is fulfilling a promise to the community. Super Park, while proposed as a standalone destination will also allow users to visit the library and businesses on the common. It would help with Economic Development both in the immediate area but also with the businesses on route. Families may stop for dinner or a snack, or run errands on their way to or from the park. Super Park would be great to keep people in town instead of leaving town for another town’s park.

Super Park will be a destination for all the families in Grafton

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jennifer Thomas', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jennifer Thomas  
Super Park Committee Chair

